

Why I Stay Active : Narratives of Highly Motivated Bachelor of Physical Education Students

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Abstract: This study explored the experiences of highly motivated Bachelor of Physical Education (BPEd) students in maintaining physical activity. Using a qualitative narrative research design, 15 BPEd students from Central Luzon State University were selected through purposive sampling and interviewed using open-ended questions. The findings revealed that participants engaged in various physical activities, including sports, exercise, dancing, running, walking, and Arnis. Their motivation was sustained by personal improvement, discipline, persistence, social support, and personal goals. Despite academic demands, fatigue, and limited time, participants maintained active lifestyles through time management and consistency. The findings also highlighted the importance of enjoyable, inclusive, and varied activities, positive feedback, recognition of effort, and supportive social environments. Overall, physical activity was viewed not only as part of their personal lifestyle but also as an important component of their identity and preparation as future Physical Education teachers. The study emphasizes the value of supportive and student-centered PE programs in sustaining motivation and participation.

Keywords: physical activity, motivation, BPEd students, Physical Education

1. Introduction

Physical activity is an essential part of a healthy lifestyle, promoting physical, mental, and social well-being. Regular participation improves physical fitness, reduces the risk of chronic diseases, enhances mental health, and supports better academic performance and overall quality of life (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020). Among college students, physical activity also helps reduce stress, improve concentration, build self-confidence, and encourage lifelong healthy habits (Martin et al., 2016). For Bachelor of Physical Education (BPEd) students, regular participation in physical activity is a core part of their academic training and professional preparation. Despite academic demands and personal responsibilities, many remain highly motivated to stay active. According to Martin et al. (2017), students' motivational profiles influence their participation in physical activity, highlighting motivation as a key factor in sustaining active behavior. However, while previous studies have identified factors related to motivation, fewer have explored the personal narratives and lived experiences of highly motivated Bachelor of Physical Education students.

Motivation is one of the most important factors influencing an individual's decision to participate in and sustain physical activity. In Physical Education (PE), students who are highly motivated are more likely to actively engage in learning activities, persist through challenges, and develop positive attitudes toward maintaining an active lifestyle (Manninen & Yli-Piipari, 2021). Research has shown that when students' psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are supported, they are more likely to develop self-determined

motivation, resulting in greater participation in physical activity and healthier long-term behaviors (Wang & Chen, 2022).

Among university students, motivation has also been associated with psychological well-being and continued engagement in physical activity. Zhong (2024) reported that students with stronger intrinsic motivation for physical activity demonstrated better psychological well-being and were more likely to maintain active lifestyles. Likewise, Sun et al. (2025) found that exercise motivation and positive achievement emotions significantly influenced college students' participation in physical activity, highlighting the importance of understanding the personal factors that encourage students to remain active.

Recent studies further emphasize the importance of creating motivational learning environments in Physical Education. A systematic review by Fernández-Espínola et al. (2022) found that interventions based on Self-Determination Theory and Achievement Goal Theory significantly improve students' motivation and intention to remain physically active. Similarly, quality Physical Education programs have been shown to enhance students' motivation and encourage consistent participation in physical activity by promoting positive learning experiences and supportive educational environments (Provision of Quality Physical Education to Enhance the Motive of Physical Activity and Its Underlying Behavior Among University Students, 2024).

Bachelor of Physical Education (BPED) is expected to participate actively in various physical activities as part of their academic preparation and future professional responsibilities. Their curriculum requires regular involvement in sports, exercise, and movement-based learning experiences that develop both physical competence and teaching skills. Despite academic workloads, physical demands, and personal responsibilities, many Bachelor of Physical Students continue to demonstrate strong motivation to remain physically active. Martin et al. (2017) suggested that students' motivational profiles influence their participation in physical activity, indicating that motivation is a key factor in sustaining active behavior. However, while previous studies have identified factors associated with motivation, fewer studies have explored the personal narratives and lived experiences of highly motivated Bachelor of Physical Education students.

This study aims to explore, entitled "Why I Stay Active": Narratives of Highly Motivated Bachelor of Physical Education Students," seeks to explore the experiences of highly motivated Bachelor of Physical Education students regarding their participation in physical activity. Specifically, it aims to understand how they describe their participation in physical activity, identify the personal experiences that sustain their motivation, and generate insights that may inform effective motivational strategies in Physical Education. By giving voice to students lived experiences, this study hopes to contribute to a deeper understanding of motivation in Physical Education and provide valuable information that may help educators design learning environments that encourage lifelong participation in physical activity.

Statement of the Problem

1. How do highly motivated students describe their participation in physical activity?
2. What personal experiences sustain their motivation?
3. What insights can find motivational strategies in PE?

2. Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative narrative research design to explore and understand the experiences of the participants through their personal stories. Narrative research focuses on how individuals describe, interpret, and give meaning to their experiences through storytelling (Nasheeda et al., 2019). Similarly, Adhikari (2021) explains that participants' stories are gathered through inquiry, re-storied by the researcher, and presented as narratives. This approach was considered appropriate because the study aimed to capture participants' experiences as they unfolded and preserve the context and meaning of their personal stories.

Participants

The respondents of this study were composed of fifteen (15) college students who were enrolled in the Bachelor of Physical Education (BPED) program at Central Luzon State University (CLSU), with participants from

first year to fourth year. The respondents were selected based on the established inclusion criteria and their willingness to participate in the study. Before taking part in the study, all respondents provided informed consent.

Purposive sampling was used to select the respondents. This sampling technique allowed the researchers to intentionally choose participants who met the established inclusion criteria and had relevant characteristics or experiences needed to address the objectives of the study.

Data Collection

Data was gathered through in-depth interviews. The interviews consisted of open-ended and guided questions based on the three problems stated in the study. Each participant shared their personal story about staying physically active, described their experiences in physical activities, and explained what kept them motivated despite being both an athlete and a student performer. The sessions were recorded with their permission to ensure that all details captured were accurate.

Data Analysis

The study will employ Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework to analyze the narratives of the 15 highly motivated Bachelor of Physical Education students:

1. Familiarization with the data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report

The interview responses will be carefully examined to understand how the participants describe their participation in physical activities, the personal experiences that sustain their motivation, and their insights on motivational strategies in Physical Education. Significant statements will be identified and coded, while similar responses will be grouped to form categories and themes. The identified themes will then be reviewed and interpreted based on the research questions to present the participants shared and unique experiences as highly motivated BPED students.

Ethical Consideration

The researchers followed ethical principles throughout the study to protect the rights and privacy of the participants. Before conducting the interviews, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the interview process, and their role in the research. Their participation was completely voluntary, and they could withdraw from the study at any time if they no longer wished to continue. To protect their identity, participant codes were used instead of their real names, and all responses were kept confidential. Interviews were audio-recorded only with the participants' permission to ensure that the information gathered was accurate. All recordings and transcripts were securely stored and accessed only by the researchers. The data collected were used only for the purposes of this study, and the researchers treated all participants with respect and fairness throughout the research process.

3. Results and Discussion

Participation in Physical Activity and Active Lifestyle

Theme 1: Engagement in Different Physical Activities

The participants described their participation in various physical activities, including sports, exercise, dancing, running, walking, and arnis. Their participation was influenced by their interests, sports specialization, and BPED experiences.

She usually practices arnis, particularly the "basic movements, strikes, blocks, and footwork," and performs simple exercises to improve her "strength and coordination and endurance." (P1)

He usually does “*mag jogging mag work out*” and plays different sports because “*mahilig ako sa sports.*” He also participates in school activities such as fun runs. (P2)

He participates in “basketball, futsal, at volleyball,” as well as arnis and folk dance, including daily walking, running, and stretching. (P3)

Other participants also reported “*jogging, walking, stretching and simple workouts,*” softball, gym workouts, running, dancing, volleyball, sprinting, conditioning, push-ups, sit-ups, and arnis. (P5, P6, P7, P8, P10, P11, P12)

These responses show that the participants engage in varied physical activities based on their interests, skills, and experiences. Their participation reflects an active lifestyle involving both structured and informal physical activities.

Theme 2: Time Management in Maintaining Physical Activity

Time management was identified as important in maintaining physical activity despite academic responsibilities, schoolwork, training, and other commitments.

“Pag may free time ako or free classes or schoolworks, ginagamit ko ito para mag practice ng arnis and improve my skills.” (P1)

“Kapag walang training kapag may free time ako nag e exercise ako,” particularly when academic responsibilities are lighter. (P2)

He allocates “1–2 oras tuwing umaga bago pumasok sa klase at isa pang oras tuwing hapon pagkatapos ng aming mga aralin” for physical activity. (P3)

She exercises “pag may free time ako” and tries to exercise even for a short period after finishing schoolwork. (P5)

Despite being busy with student-teaching responsibilities, she tries to spend “at least 20–30 minutes doing physical activities whenever I have the opportunity.” (P8)

Other participants also emphasized following their schedules, managing academic responsibilities, and maintaining “discipline and commitment” to continue training. (P10, P12)

These responses show that participants use time management to maintain physical activity despite busy schedules. They also demonstrate that physical activity can be maintained through short but consistent periods of exercise.

Theme 3: Physical Activity as Part of BPEd Identity and Future Profession

The participants connected physical activity with their identity as BPEd students and their preparation for becoming future PE teachers.

“Stay active means continuously improving my physical skills and taking care my body,” and “arnis and other physical activities are connected to what I am study.” (P1)

As a BPEd student, being active is important because “importante kasi yun, bped student ako eh.” (P3)

“Future P.E teacher ako kaya dapat maging good example din ako sa mga students.” (P5)

She needs to learn “what is the proper movement or activities I can use as an approach for my future students.” (P9)

She is “not only learning physical education but also need to practice what I learned.” (P10)

Physical activity is also part of her identity as an athlete and future teacher. (P12)

These responses indicate that physical activity is more than personal exercise for the participants. It is also part of their professional preparation, helping them develop physical skills, discipline, confidence, and practical knowledge for their future roles as PE teachers.

Personal Experiences That Sustain Motivation

Theme 1: Personal Improvement as a Source of Motivation

Personal improvement was a major source of motivation. Participants became encouraged when they noticed progress in their skills, fitness, endurance, and performance.

She realized “kung gano ka importante ang practice, discipline and focus” through her arnis competition experience. (P1)

"Kapag nakikita kong mas kaya ko na yung mga activities na dati nahihirapan ako, ma na momotivate akong ipag patuloy kasi meron siyang progress sa katawan ko." (P2)

She becomes motivated when she notices that she is "mas nagiging energetic" and can perform activities better than before. (P5)

"kahit Maliit lang na bagay it's motivating me to continue and to be better." (P10)

She also learned to appreciate small progress when returning to training after a long break. (P12)

These responses show that recognizing personal progress strengthens motivation. Small improvements in skills, fitness, and performance encourage participants to continue their physical activities.

Theme 2: Challenges and Persistence in Maintaining Physical Activity

The participants experienced challenges such as academic responsibilities, tiredness, lack of motivation, competition pressure, and difficulty maintaining consistency.

She experienced pressure during competitions, especially when making "mga mali na palo," but remained focused and followed her game plan. (P1)

She manages academic and physical activity demands by "inaayos ko yung schedule ko para may time pa rin sa pag exercise kahit na medyo nagiging busy sa studies." (P2)

When she feels busy or "tinatamad," she starts with simple exercises, so she does not feel overwhelmed. (P5)

"Once na sobrang tamad ko ganon pero tayo nalang ako. Ang motivation ko ay tapusin nalang." (P6)

She manages training, academic requirements, and physical and mental tiredness through time management and discipline. (P10)

She gradually rebuilt her performance after returning to training following a long break. (P12)

These responses indicate that discipline, persistence, time management, and gradual progression help participants overcome challenges and maintain physical activity even when motivation is low.

Theme 3: Social Support and Personal Goals as Sources of Motivation

Social support and personal goals were important sources of motivation for the participants.

"Unang una syempre yung pamilya ko tapos sa mga kaibigan ko." (P2)

Her family, teachers, and personal goals motivate her, especially because the "skills and discipline" she develops can help her as a future BPEd professional. (P3)

"Classmates ko, friends, and teachers" provide encouragement and motivation. (P5)

"My family, my coaches, my teammates" provide support, especially during difficult periods. (P10)

"My family, friends, coaches and my own goals" motivate her to remain active and improve in arnis. (P11)

Her family, coaches, teammates, and personal goals also encourage her to continue training. (P12)

These responses show that motivation comes from both external and internal sources. Support from others provides encouragement, while personal goals encourage commitment and self-improvement.

Motivational Strategies in Physical Education

Theme 1: Enjoyment and Positive Social Interaction

Enjoyment and positive interaction with classmates and friends were identified as important factors that make physical activities more motivating.

"Mas masaya kapag may kasama," showing that social interaction makes physical activities more enjoyable. (P2)

Supportive classmates and fun activities make her more willing to participate. (P5)

"Working with my classmates also makes the activities more exciting because we can encourage and support each other." (P8)

PE classes are motivating because they involve different activities and body movements. (P9)

She becomes more motivated when activities are enjoyable and when she is with friends or classmates. (P11)

Activities become more motivating when they are "enjoyable challenging and meaningful." (P12)

These responses indicate that enjoyable activities and positive social interaction can increase students' willingness to participate. A supportive environment can make physical activity more engaging and meaningful.

Theme 2: Inclusive and Varied Physical Activities

The participants emphasized the importance of providing activities that consider different abilities, interests, and skill levels.

Teachers should provide “ibat ibang activities” because “hindi naman tayo pare parehas ng kakayahan.” (P2)

PE teachers should focus on “proper technique, discipline and improvements rather than just winning.” (P3)

Teachers should encourage all students and appreciate their effort and improvement, even when they are not highly skilled. (P5)

Activities should be “more enjoyable and Inclusive” so students will not feel pressured or intimidated. (P10)

Not all students are athletes or confident in physical activities, so teachers should provide activities where everyone can participate without fear of embarrassment or comparison. (P12)

These responses highlight the importance of inclusive and student-centered PE instruction. Varied activities and a focus on improvement can encourage participation among students with different abilities and interests.

Theme 3: Positive Feedback and Recognition of Effort

Positive feedback and recognition of individual effort were also identified as effective motivational strategies.

“Kilalanin ang pag-unlad ng bawat estudyante, hindi lamang ang pinakamahusay.” (P3)

Teachers should “ma-appreciate nila yung effort and improvement.” (P5)

The use of “positive feedback” and encouragement can help students become more confident. (P8)

Teachers should encourage students and recognize improvement instead of focusing only on performance. (P10)

Students should not be compared with others because each student has different abilities and experiences. (P12)

These responses show that recognizing effort and progress can strengthen students’ confidence and motivation. Positive feedback can encourage students to continue improving regardless of their current skill level.

Theme 4: Starting Small, Being Consistent, and Enjoying the Process

The participants encouraged students to start with simple activities, remain consistent, and avoid putting too much pressure on themselves.

“Start with small steps” and do not be afraid to make mistakes. (P1)

“Mag simula sa simple at wag sumuko agad.” (P2)

“Start in small progress and don’t pressure yourself too much.” (P5)

“Motivations sometimes disappear but discipline and consistency that keep you going.” (P10)

Students should start slowly and choose a sport or activity that they enjoy. (P11)

Students should start small, remain consistent, and avoid comparing their progress with others. (P12)

These responses demonstrate that physical activity can be sustained through small and realistic steps. The participants recognized that motivation may change, making discipline, consistency, enjoyment, and gradual improvement important for maintaining an active lifestyle.

4. Conclusion

The findings demonstrate that participation in physical activity among BPEd students is shaped by personal interests, academic responsibilities, and their identity as future PE teachers. Students engage in diverse activities such as sports, exercise, dance, and cultural practices, showing that physical activity extends beyond formal PE classes into daily routines. While challenges such as fatigue, busy schedules, and academic demands remain evident, students increasingly recognize the value of discipline, time management, and persistence in sustaining an active lifestyle.

Supportive families, peers, coaches, and teachers, along with inclusive and enjoyable activities, emerged as important factors that enhance motivation, confidence, and participation. Recognition of effort, personal improvement, and positive social interactions help reduce barriers and encourage students to appreciate progress rather than comparison. Overall, the study highlights the need for consistent, inclusive, and student-centered Physical Education programs that provide equitable opportunities for all learners. Creating supportive

PE environments can contribute not only to improved participation and fitness but also to the development of discipline, confidence, and professional readiness among future PE teachers.

5. Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, Bachelor of Physical Education students are encouraged to stay physically active by managing their time well, setting realistic goals, and choosing physical activities that they genuinely enjoy. Starting with simple activities and gradually becoming more active can help them build confidence, maintain a healthy lifestyle, and stay motivated. Physical Education teachers are encouraged to provide enjoyable, inclusive, and meaningful learning experiences that recognize the different abilities and interests of their students. While good performance is important, greater emphasis should also be given to learning, personal improvement, and active participation. Teachers and instructors are also encouraged to recognize the efforts of all students, not only those who perform the best, by giving positive encouragement and constructive feedback that motivates them to keep improving. Schools and PE programs should continue providing facilities, equipment, and opportunities that encourage students to participate in sports, fitness activities, recreational programs, and other forms of physical activity. Likewise, the support of families, friends, classmates, coaches, and teammates plays an important role in helping students stay motivated and continue participating in physical activities. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to conduct similar studies with a larger and more diverse group of participants to gain a broader understanding of students' motivation and participation in physical activities. They may also explore other factors, such as academic workload, fatigue, available opportunities for physical activity, and different teaching approaches, to better understand what encourages students to remain physically active.

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